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MASSACHUSETTS

Dictionary Magazine.**BIOGRAPHY.**

COTTON MATHER, D. D.

[Concluded from page 84.]

HAVING hitherto chiefly considered Dr. Mather in a public character, let us now view him as a private Christian.

His *resignation* to the divine will was very great. "I take, (says he) the enjoyment of thee, O Lord, for my great and sole happiness, and, which is the peculiar thing I am now aiming at, I take thy will to be my will. As for my own will, I find it blind, foolish, wicked, hurtful, and therefore I renounce, reject and resign it, and say, *Lord, let thy will be done.* I cast all my cares upon my God—and now I am inconceivably happy. The Lord God Almighty will perform all things for me, and all things now shall be well performed. Whatever now befalls me will be an effect of the great Jehovah's infinite wisdom and goodness; and though it be never so really cross to my humour, and seemingly cross to my welfare, I will take contentment in it, because I will look upon it as the will of him that is wise and good; the will of him that is my friend, my Father, my God; the will of him who hath undertaken the conduct of all my affairs for ever. And, O my soul, remember thou, after this, never to be disturbed about future events, and always to approve the present dealings of the Lord."

As an evidence of his *devotedness* and *love* to his Master, we give the following extract from his diary: "Lord, I give up my name unto thee; if thou wilt have it reproached, I am content; only give me thy Christ, and I will be satisfied. Yea I will seek the honour of thy name, whether the honour of my own be advantaged or prejudiced by my doing so. Lord, if any of my delights are sinful, or as far as they are sinful, I utterly forego them, and beseech thee to make me abhor them. Jesus Christ, my Lord, is better to me than any of them, than all of them. If they are lawful, yet will I leave them, when either the command or the glory of the Lord calls me another way."

His *diligence* in *laying hold of opportunities*, and *improving* all proper means to maintain and cherish the divine life in his soul, appears

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by the following extracts: "The thoughts of Christ (says he) are become exceeding frequent with me; I meditate on his glorious person, as the eternal Son of God incarnate, and I behold the infinite God as coming to me and meeting with me in this blessed Mediator. I fly to him on multitudes of occasions every day, and am impatient if many minutes have passed without some recourse to him. Every now and then I rebuke myself for having been so long without any thoughts of my lovely Saviour. How can I bear to keep at such a distance from him! I then look up to him, and say, O my dear Saviour, draw near unto me! O come to dwell in my soul, and help me to form some thoughts wherein I shall enjoy thee!—Upon this I set myself to think of his glories, his merits, his pattern, his maxims, what he has done, and what he will do for us. I find the subject infinitely inexhaustible. And after I have been thus employed the day, I fall asleep at night, in the midst of some meditation on the glory of my Saviour; so I "fall asleep in Jesus;" and when I awake in the night, I do, on my bed, "seek him whom my soul loveth." The desires of my soul still carry me to him who was last in my thoughts when I fell asleep."

With respect to the regard he had to *earthly enjoyments*, let us likewise hear his own words: "By the faithful dispensations of God (says he) I am brought to this, that I feel myself dead unto all creatures. I have given the sacrificing stroke to all my worldly enjoyments. My serviceableness to the kingdom of my Saviour was the last thing that in my death, of all things here below, I parted with; it was the thing that I could least of all part with. But I have submitted unto it, that the ever-blessed God should not only make me vile among his people, but also utterly lay me aside from doing any more services for his kingdom in the world. I have been entirely dead unto every thing else, and have had nothing but this one thing left me, *viz*, "that I may have my Jesus not only doing for me, but also dwelling in me, and enabling me perpetually to feed and live upon him." This will be enough. I care not if I am stript of every thing else, if I may but enjoy this felicity.

"As for the delights of this world, such of them as are most helpful to me in seeing and serving God, are those which I would have the greatest value for. But I know of no delights comparable to those which I take in communion with my Saviour. As for the *riches* of this world, I use no labour for them, I have no desire to obtain them; they appear to me as contemptible things. My riches are my opportunities to do good, and those illuminations of my mind which furnish me for it. In my Saviour I have unsearchable riches, and in my fruition of him I have a supply of all my wants. As for the *honours* of this world, my abhorrence of having the great God robbed on
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my account, by people's honouring *me*, without their being led through *me* to *him*, renders the praises of men distasteful to me : I do nothing to gain honours for myself, and whatever honours are conferred upon me by men, shall be improved for the interest of God. To be accepted of my Saviour, to have his image imprinted on me, and to be employed in his work, for the advancement of his kingdom, are all the honours that I wish for.

"How many, O Lord, are my thoughts of thee ! The occasions on which, and the means by which, I cherish such thoughts, cannot be reckoned up in order. When I see any thing excellent in any man, it leads my thoughts to the superior excellences in God my Saviour ; and when I behold the miseries of any of my fellow-creatures, I think on the miseries from which I am delivered by my Saviour, and on my obligations to my kind Deliverer. I dare not let my mind be idle as I walk in the streets ; I rebuke myself, and I make my moan to Heaven, if I have gone many steps without one thought of my Saviour ; and when I have been at a loss for fresh thoughts of him, I have compelled the very *signs*, and the *shops* in the street, to suggest new matter for meditation. Many persons are inquiring after *news* ; I am grown very cold to such things ; my concern about them, and my pleasure in them, is much extinguished. Some new thoughts of my Saviour shall be the *news* after which I shall most inquire. Here I have my curiosity gratified a thousand times more than by the news of the common occurrences in the world. I have done expecting any good things from the world ; or if such expectations do at any time arise in my mind, I check them with this thought, What is the good, O my soul, of that which thou expectest ? All this good thou hast already in thy Saviour.

"I daily find in myself such imperfections, infirmities, and miscarriages, as cause me to humble and to abhor myself before the Lord ; but I endeavour to raise the honours of Christ upon my own humiliations. For whatever I see mean and vile in myself, leads me to think how much the reverse of this is to be seen in my Jesus ; from *loathing* of myself, I would proceed to *loving* of my Saviour ; and from a sense of my own unrighteousness, I would affect my heart with that only righteousness which I have to plead, that I may be justified before God."

It was the practice of Dr. Mather, from the fourteenth year of his age, almost to his death, to keep a private fast, or a day of more than ordinary devotion, at least *once* a-month ; and when he had any affair of considerable importance before him, he would often keep *weekly* fasts, and sometimes *two* in one week. The frame of his soul on those days he generally recorded in his diary. On one day he writes thus : "This day
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having humbled myself, and judged myself before the Lord, for my many provocations, and watered my couch with my tears, in the apprehension of my exceeding vileness, at length floods of tears gushed from me, in my laying hold of the pardoning mercy of God in Jesus Christ. The Spirit of the Most High brought me to a marvellous temper, which was to me like the very suburbs of heaven, wherein he assured me that all my sins were forgiven, and that his anger, in the sense of which my soul trembled, should no more burn against me. Upon this I called to mind the names of as many persons as I could learn had reproached and injured me, and I most heartily begged the God of heaven in the behalf of them, one by one, that they might be blessed with the blessings of his goodness, and especially with such blessings as were most suitable for them.

Besides these *fasts*, this pious man kept days of *thanksgiving* to God for his mercies.

Dr. Mather also followed the practice of the primitive Christians, who, understanding the command, "to watch unto prayer," in a more literal sense than is now commonly taken, had sometimes their *vigils*, i. e. they spent a good part of the night in prayer. He has often risen in the dead of the night, and retired in to his study, where he has spent several hours in acts of devotion, and where he has often found the abridging himself of his natural rest has been abundantly recompensed to him, by spiritual enjoyments.

The manner in which he employed the Lord's day is likewise worthy of particular notice. A considerable part of the Saturday afternoon was spent by him in private acts of devotion, preparatory to the duties and services of the Sabbath. In the evening he endeavoured to divest his mind of all worldly thoughts, and called upon his family to prepare for the approaching day. On Sabbath morning he rose *earlier than usual*. After a meditation, while he was dressing, he sung a hymn, then addressed himself to God in a short prayer for the pardon of the sins of his past Sabbaths, and for grace to sanctify this day to his honour. Then he read a portion of the Old Testament in Hebrew, another in French, and a part of the New Testament in Greek. Upon these he usually wrote down remarks as he went along; afterwards he made his morning prayer in his study. After this, he sung and prayed in his family, and gave them all a solemn charge to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." He then retired again into his study, when, in another short prayer, he recommended himself, and the ordinances he was going to attend, to the blessing of God.

While he was attending on public worship, he carefully watched his thoughts, to keep them from wandering, and he laboured to get his heart suitably affected and impressed with what he heard,

heard, and what he sung ; and, for that purpose, he used to intermix a great many short ejaculations with the public service. After it was over, he set himself to awaken in his own heart such spiritual desires, or to form such holy purposes, as were suitable to the subject of the discourse he had been hearing ; and he did not forget to send a pious wish to heaven, that all the hearers might be profited by it.

Upon his return to his study, he read some portion of scripture, or some other discourse concerning the great sabbatism which the church is encouraged to look for, and the glorious things which are spoken of the city of God. At his table, he entertained the company with some profitable discourse ; and, indeed, through the whole Lord's day, he set a very particular watch upon his lips, that not one word might drop from him on that day, but what was *good to the use of edifying*.

He looked upon charity to the poor as a duty more especially belonging to the Lord's day, and on this account he usually had some at his table.

After dinner he returned to his study, when, after he had offered up a prayer for the advancement of religion in the world, and for the hastening the day of God, he looked over his notes of the sermon he was to preach in the afternoon, and endeavoured to stir up in his own mind such affections, desires, and holy purposes, as were suitable to every part of it. For this he implored the help of Divine Grace, as well as for the public work which was now immediately before him.

When the public service was over, and when he had taken some necessary refreshment, he retired again for prayer. Then he called his family together, and catechised the children, and went over the discourses which had been delivered, in a familiar manner, by asking them questions upon what they had heard. After this he retired again into his study for some time, which he spent in reading and meditation ; then he returned to his family, and heard every child who was able, read a portion of some book, from which he took occasion to give them instructions of his own. After this he sung a hymn with his family, and concluded the service of the day with prayer, particularly imploring forgiveness of the sins they had committed in it, and returning thanks for the mercies they had received, and committing himself, and his family, and all his interests, into the hands of his dear Saviour.

Such was the manner in which Dr. Mather spent his life. From the above account, every one must perceive that he must have been amazingly diligent in improving time. Yet, notwithstanding this, and the manner in which he employed it, at the end of one year he speaks of it as 'time so mispent as to render it unfit to be called life ;' another he calls 'a year of forfeited

feited life;' while of a third he says, 'Another year of my sinning against my precious Redeemer! Alas, my unfruitfulness!'

Though Dr. Mather's life was in a manner one continual preparation for death, yet he did not neglect to improve the warnings which God sometimes gave him, by bodily sickness, to make a more immediate and actual preparation for his great change, particularly to get his heart more thoroughly weaned from the world, to get his will more completely resigned to the will of God, and to get the desires of his soul more strongly fixed in the heavenly state.

About the beginning of January, 1727-8, he was seized with his last sickness. During his illness, he often expressed the strong consolations he had in the views of heaven, which carried him above the love of life, and the fear of death; and also his full assurance that he should not be lost, but that he was going to eat the bread of life, and drink the waters of life freely, when all tears should be wiped from his eyes forever. At last, God was pleased to favour him with an easy dismissal out of this life, February 13th following, in the 65th year of his age. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

RELIGIOUS CONFERENCE.

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CONFERENCE III.

On the Divinity of Scripture.

Clerus. **T**HIS field, my young friends, has been frequently explored, by the most able men, both of this and distant ages. I do not, therefore, expect to advance any new argument in favour of special revelation, nor even to place familiar ones in a more conspicuous and convincing light. But, considering the prevailing infidelity of the day, and the difficulty of procuring and consulting some of the best writers on the subject, this attempt, in familiar conference, will be excused, if not approved: for to open, guide and protect the youthful mind, is the manifest duty and privilege of the pastoral office.

Theophilus. We think, Sir, that your design needs no apology. The subject is necessary and acceptable: for several members of the conference have expressed their desire to attend to it carefully. Though I have several years pursued the study of theology, I feel my insufficiency when conversing with the infidels of the age, who have furnished themselves with eve-

ry weapon of defence. We therefore hope you will indulge freedom in the inquiry. That which is familiar to others will probably appear new to us.

Clerus. We will proceed. The light of nature, according to the sentiments treated at the last conference, not only inculcates the moral perfection of Deity, but also suggests the necessity, and excites the hope, of a more particular revelation: for how can man improve the display of God's greatness and goodness in the operations of providence, and not expect a more ample and distinct revelation of his will? To me the volume of nature appears like a preface or introduction to a *glorious volume* of grace. Is it not probable, if God were to vary, in a sovereign manner, from his common course of administration, and regenerate distant savages while wholly ignorant of special revelation, that they would be devoutly engaged to ascertain more of his moral character? Would they be contented with the volume of nature? I presume not: for the general manifestation of God's perfections, in all surrounding objects, indicates that he is on a treaty of peace with rebellious man. If savages were regenerated, they would quit the wild chase, abandon their idols, and go in quest of more information relative to the GREAT SPIRIT who made the rivers, mountains and stars. O Lord, how long, how long before these savage hunters, who now roam the forest like wolves and tygers, shall repent, and seek the light of the gospel!

Theophilus. Excuse my freedom: I believe the light of nature, like the morning star, indicates the succeeding light of revelation. This corresponds with the analogy of things. But why this establishment? why this arrangement in divine manifestations? why nature's volume first?

Clerus. Why the body before the soul? and why are children taught their letters, and the primer, before they are put to the Bible?

Theophilus. That they may be qualified to read and understand it like men.

Clerus. Thus the volume of nature contains the rudiments of godly information and education. To this, therefore, the Bible frequently appeals and refers to support its divinity: for all the manifestations and revelations of God to man are concurrent, and beautifully harmonious and consistent.

Theophilus. I will detain the conference no longer: for the necessity and utility of the volume of nature, in order to examine and adopt the volume of inspiration, is conspicuously manifest. Give me leave, then, to ask, What evidence have we that the Bible is the word of God, and given by his special inspiration?

Clerus. It is evident the Bible is the word of God, because
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it is a history of his special operations. It is the register of eternal realities, and not fictions. It is the peculiar language of God to man.

Theophilus. I grant the Bible is God's word, if it can be proved that it is a history of special facts. But how can it be proved that a book which records so many miracles, and predictions, and contains such peculiar doctrines and rules of discipline, was put into the hand of man by the spirit of inspiration? How shall we establish its authenticity and genuineness, and silence the infidel who styles it an imposition? For to advocate its divinity, aside from its authenticity and genuineness, is manifestly fruitless.

Clerus. True, my young friend; much depends upon the authenticity and genuineness of the scripture history. Let us then proceed with care upon the broad basis of public testimony. For, at this day, ocular demonstration, or the testimony of sense, is neither claimed nor needed. As we establish the authenticity of other writings, so we establish the authenticity of scripture. Public testimony is the only evidence which is required in the present argument. For instance; Were there such ancient dominions as Greece and Rome? Were there such men as Socrates and Plato, and their scholars? Yes; for the united testimonies of antiquity establish the affirmative: and we have no more reason to dispute the testimony of antiquity relative to these objects, than to reject the testimony of sense relative to our own existence. That we exist, and that those characters and dominions existed thousands of years ago, none will deny, though the testimonies which establish the facts are diverse. On the same principle of public testimony we prove that two thousand years ago there were in the land of Judea, and at Rome, such characters as Christ and his disciples and apostles, who were the authors of the New Testament. If we deny the testimony of ancient history relative to Christ and his followers, we must also relative to the ancient philosophers. If we embrace it in one case, we must in the other. The consequence is then obvious and undeniable.

Theophilus. I perceive that the authenticity of the New Testament is as safe as the authenticity of ancient history. But pray inform us more particularly when and by whom the New Testament was written; and in whose hands it has been preserved during so many centuries of contention and revolution.

Clerus. Testimony informs us that it was written at the commencement of the Christian æra, by the Evangelists and Apostles who have subscribed it. By their successors the various parts comprising the book were faithfully collected and arranged as they now appear in the sacred canon. This collection, we are informed by infallible testimony, was in the hands of the devout

devout fathers of the first and second centuries, who considered and venerated it as the special word of God: for they not only read and expounded it, but appealed to it in case of religious controversy, and with reverence made it the *only* standard of faith and practice. From the primitive fathers and church the Bible was handed to the jealous catholics a little after the reign of Constantine: & from them the memorable reformers have handed it safely down to us, with all the marks of authenticity, genuineness and authority. The orations of Cicero, the commentaries of Cæsar, the histories of Greece and Rome, are not more amply authenticated, by ancient and modern testimony, than the New Testament. As we know where the Bible is at present, so we know where it was the last century, and every preceding century, till we finally recur to the evangelists and apostles, who were the inspired authors.

Theophilus. The cases are manifestly parallel. The infallible testimony of ages stamps the Bible with as many signatures of authenticity and genuineness as it does any other books. Indeed no ancient book is so amply shielded as the Bible. In one word: If any argument derived from the faithful registers of antiquity proves that Homer was the author of the Iliad, and Virgil of the Æneid, the same proves that the evangelists were the authors of the Gospel. But are the authenticity and genuineness of the Bible sufficient evidence of its divinity? For, though the Iliad and Æneid have every mark of authenticity and genuineness, they have no mark of inspiration or divinity.

Clerus. You now, Theophilus, touch the point in hand: and except infallible testimony, and the nature of the composition, ascribe inspiration to the authors of the Bible, the argument must falter. Public testimony acknowledges the writings of the ancient philosophers, poets and historians to be signal productions of antiquity; but never ascribes inspiration to any ancient writers but the authors of the Bible. The ancient register of inspired names is potent evidence in the present case. If public testimony proves that the evangelists and apostles were the authors of the New Testament, it equally proves that they were inspired: for they, in the most public, artless and faithful manner, undertake to communicate to men what they received by special inspiration from God. They humbly and confidently considered themselves the instruments and organs of divine communication. What they received from God they faithfully delivered to men. They wrote and spake as they felt; and their exercises were the effects of God's special agency on their minds and hearts.

Theophilus. But was it impossible for the authors of the Bible to deceive the world?

Clerus. Was it possible for them to blind the sun? For the cardinal contents of the gospel are the history of Christ's words and works, of which both learned Jews and Gentiles were personal witnesses. What the attentive world saw Christ perform, and what they heard him speak in the most public manner, the evangelists have inserted in the history of his life. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you," was the language of the gospel historians. What ample opportunity then was there for the world to detect and expose them, if guilty of imposition! Their profession and history were of such a nature that it was impossible to deceive, or to escape detection. But who of their cotemporaries, and who among either the ancients or moderns, have attacked the veracity of the gospel history with any success? Those who have presumptuously made the attempt, like Julian and others, have exposed themselves, but not the gospel. By endeavouring to invalidate the gospel history, the infidels of every age have not only laboured in vain, but, contrary to their wicked design, been the occasion of displaying its validity and glory. The rock of ages is infinitely safe, though in the midst of the angry ocean. The feeble infidel can neither hide the sun by shutting his own eyes, nor conceal the light of day from others.

Theophilus. The argument in favour of the divinity of scripture derived from the genuineness of the gospel history is obvious: for if the Bible be a history of facts, and not a collection of fictions, it is necessarily the word of God to man. But what is the difference between the genuineness and veracity of scripture, and the divinity of scripture?

Clerus. The diversity is like what is discovered between the truth of a proposition and the *inseparable consequence* flowing from it. For instance, agreeably to a remark lately made, we prove that the gospel is a history of facts; and the undeniable conclusion is therefore this, that it was divinely inspired; for it is a history of the acts and effects of inspiration. God revealing himself in a special manner to man, is the summary of gospel history.

Theophilus. The answer is satisfactory. But is there no other class of witnesses whose influence is worthy of notice in this connexion?

Clerus. Yes; the apostles make another substantial class: for, instead of being ashamed of their Lord and Master, or dismayed at his numerous enemies, they advance confidently in his name, work miracles, and, amid the most formidable opposition, preach the self-denying religion of Christ, with the most unshaken faith and admirable success. Compared with the sublime theory of religion which Paul inculcated, the heathen philosophy is folly and madness. The same bold and
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subtil measures were adopted by Jews and Gentiles to invalidate the testimony of the apostles, which had been previously used to sap the authority of the evangelists. But as the apostles executed their mission in the most public manner, as both friends and enemies were witnesses of what they inculcated and effected, public testimony has given them the palm, and baffled their opposers. The heroic exploits of Cyrus and Xenophon are not more credible than the acts and writings of the apostles. They all stand on the same basis of public testimony.

Theophilus. We are pleased with the parallel between those captains of antiquity and the soldiers of Christ. Public testimony registers their names in the book of fame. But still what evidence have we that they were under the peculiar guidance of inspiration?

Clerus. They claim the influence of inspiration, and support the claim by miraculous operations. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, take up thy bed and walk," was the style of the apostles; and their word was effectual. Whenever it was expedient to authenticate their mission by extraordinary signs, the massy doors of the prison opened without hands, or perjured wretches dropped dead at their feet. Who does not see that miracles are the test of special legation? For the Author of nature only is able to controul her laws, and produce events diverse from her regular operations. Such were the signs of the apostles. The servants of God, the friends of men, disengaged from worldly motives, they met no difficulties too great to be removed, and no obstacles too high to be surmounted, if they might advance the interest of Christ's kingdom. They taught by example, as well as by precept. Between their doctrines and lives there subsisted the most lovely and persuasive harmony. In one word; as their object was heavenly, their hearts were elevated above temporal interest and fame. These are the men who furnish a testimony in favour of the scripture: and shall not their testimony obtain? For the light and attempts of two thousand years cannot invalidate it. Great is the force of public testimony, and it will prevail. The sun will shine, though infidels cannot bear the light.

Theophilus. But is there no other class of evidence, of a different complexion from what we have examined? Does not the peculiar nature of scripture furnish an argument in support of its divinity?

Clerus. Yes; the system of truth contained in the Bible establishes its divinity. The contents of the book are manifestly divine, and not the fruits of impostors: for, though wicked men and wicked spirits will speciously oppose themselves a little while, to carry a favourite point, they will not really and designedly oppose themselves in the most pointed manner forever.

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The disinterested, holy religion of the scriptures, which has for its object the highest felicity of the intelligent system, is not the theory of sinful creatures, but the theory of God. The Bible is its own witness.

Theophilus. It is hoped I realize, in some measure, the advantage of the conference. Is not this the summary of the argument—By the effect we ascertain its cause? For instance; when we take up a book and read the finished description of a memorable battle, we ascribe it to the accomplished historian. When we examine a piece of masterly painting, which displays the features of the original to the life, we attribute it to the improved limner. When we survey a most spacious and elegant mansion, we ascribe it to the ingenious architect. Thus when we attend to the great fabric of the universe, enlightened by the heavenly bodies, we ascribe it to God. He is manifestly the author. For the same reason, when we take up the Bible, and examine its contents, we are impelled to ascribe it to the Divine Being. In every page we meet God revealing his will. The theory of scripture is the theory of divinity. GOD IS THERE.

Clerus. Yes, you manifestly understand the reasoning. The excellent contents of the Bible are a thousand unanswerable arguments in favour of its inspiration. The pious child, while reading the Bible, is master of the best argument to support its divinity: for, as he reads, he devoutly esteems and adores the Author.

Theophilus. True, Sir; for Christ says, "My sheep hear my voice, and follow me: and if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

Leander. But, granting the scripture narrative is generally true, and divine, what evidence have we that it is not interpolated, in some instances containing things which are spurious?

Confusus. It is needless, Leander, to harbour the suggestion: for the ancient witnesses and guardians of the Bible were too numerous, vigilant and faithful to suffer such an imposition. The protectors of scripture neither slept long at a time, nor all at once. Farther: The nature, uniformity and harmonious consistency of the scriptures evince that they were all dictated by the same spirit, to the same sublime end. It was so ordered by Providence, that the leading characters of primitive times, who disagreed greatly about the import of the Bible, were united to preserve and hand it down to posterity pure and entire. If the moderns were as fearful of adulterating the scriptures as the ancients, they would treat their own consciences and the world more tenderly.

Fidelia.

Fidelia. I heartily concur with the sentiments of brother Theophilus. For, until I embraced Christ with all my heart, my speculative faith was wavering and unstable as water. I hope to cherish modesty while speaking : and, if not greatly deceived, I relish and enjoy the excellency of inspiration. There is a joint testimony in favour of inspiration between my spirit and the Spirit of God. I taste that God is gracious. I love honey because it is good, and the honey-comb of inspiration because it is pleasant. My freedom will be excused when I say, that my heart contains evidence that the Author of the Universe is the author of the Bible. My soul doth magnify the Lord ; and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. The Bible is my delight.

Lucinda. My feeble testimony is similar. The Bible needs no witness but itself. It is God's book. It is the repository of heaven. It breathes the spirit of divinity from end to end. By the grace of God I have leave to say that I love it : for it is a light to my feet, and a lamp to my path. It neither suffers exaltation in times of prosperity, nor depression in times of adversity. It both holds me up and keeps me down. By this divine scale of inspired truth I am enabled to make suitable calculations for life and death, time and eternity. O precious book ! Compared with this divine treasure, what are the scanty lessons of pagan morality ? What is the chaff to the wheat ? Do not thy words, O God, do good to those who walk uprightly ? Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever ; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

Clerus. If these, my young friends, are your exercises, I charge you to be humble and thankful, and give God all the glory. For who has made *Fidelia* and *Lucinda* to differ from others ? and what have any of God's children that they did not receive from the Fountain of Grace ? How beautiful are the tender flowers of spring, imbibing the dew !

Sophia. If mere conviction of the divinity of scripture were a proper testimony, distinct from Christian love, mine too might be subjoined ; for I am convinced that the Bible is the word of divine inspiration. But, alas ! while I believe the scripture is God's word, I also believe that my heart is full of enmity to the humiliating doctrines it contains. With my conscience I know the truth, but with my heart I hate and reject it.

Eusebia. Have you, *Sophia*, as much evidence that your heart disapproves the gospel, as that your conscience approves it ?

Sophia. Yes, *Eusebia* ; I both know and hate the truth as it is in Jesus. I am a wicked, wretched creature ; and without speedy repentance have nothing to expect but the dreadful wrath of God. What, alas ! shall I do ! whither can I fly for relief ?

Eusebia.

Eusebia. Do you ask the question for the sake of information, or for the sake of obtaining support while you reject Christ the only Saviour? How can you wish to fly from Christ?

Sophia. I am at a loss for an answer: for while I seem to desire instruction, I know that Christ calls upon me to repent and accept of mercy. Nothing but my own unwillingness to be saved from sin, hinders my pardon. Why does God suffer me to continue a moment? why does he not part the thread of life, and let me drop into perdition? Oh the thought! the dreadful thought!

Eusebia. Well, my dear Sophia, seeing you *know* your Master's will, you *must* do it. For the commands of Christ are reasonable. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light. O taste and see that the Lord is gracious. Why will you, how can you, refuse the precious offer of grace? Your guilt is great and aggravated, because you sin in the face of conviction. Be entreated, as life and death are the only alternatives before you, to embrace Christ, and live forever at God's right hand.

Clerus. I have nothing to add to Eusebia's remarks, which manifestly correspond with the word of God. Let us then, as we close the conference, pray that Sophia, and all others in her dangerous condition, may seasonably attend to the voice of wisdom. For, behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Delays are dangerous. We know not the day of our death. The next hour, or even the next moment, the eyes of the sinner may be closed, and his soul confined in the regions of despair.

O Sophia, it is but a little while since I was called to visit Florella on a declining bed. A more pleasing face I never saw. She was also a young lady of singular abilities and information. Though the subject of keen conviction, she was confessedly destitute of grace. Between her case and yours, her conversation and yours, there is a great similarity. Note the alarming sequel. The next day I was called again to visit her. But, alas! I found her destitute of intelligence, speechless, cold, and expiring. Soon she departed.—Several other instances of the nature I might relate; but we desist, lest more light shall increase your blindness. * * * * *

“What glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun!

It gives a light to ev'ry age;
It gives, but borrows none.

“Let everlasting thanks be thine,
For such a bright display,
Which makes a world of darkness shine
‘With beams of heav'nly day.’”

[To be continued.]

THE WICKED ISLANDERS.

To the Editors of the Massachusetts Missionary Magazine.

GENTLEMEN,

THE following historical sketch is at your service.

EUSEBIUS.

FAR distant, towards the rising sun, rises a large and beautiful island, varied in prospect with delightful hills and vales. Here and there a lofty mountain, its top covered with naked rocks, or fields of snow, pure as the beams of the sun, makes a beautiful contrast with the fertile plains. The first inhabitants with their PRINCE placed themselves in a most enchanting situation; four noble rivers watered the flowery vale. Groves of orange trees, and the richest vines, offered their delicious fruit. The palm invited them to its shade; various other fruits increased the number of their luxuries. The happy people enjoyed every wish of their hearts; their Prince was the best man in the world; he watched over them with the tenderness of a parent; he oppressed none; he bestowed favours on all. The only mark of respect, the only expression of homage, the only token of loyalty, which he required, was, that of *one tree they should not taste*. All were satisfied; neither fear, nor pain, nor sickness, nor death, were known. Their bliss was perpetual, and themselves immortal as their obedience. In this state of things a *Foreigner* landed on the island, who had long been subject to no prince, his passions his only law. He told the islanders, their prince was a tyrant; that the interdicted tree was the best in the island, that its fruit was not only pleasant to the eye, delightful to the taste, and nourishing to the body, but *enlightening to the mind*; that it would elevate them to an equality with the prince himself. His harangue had its intended effect. A woman first, more credulous and rash than the rest, put forth her hand, took, and tasted; and though she experienced *none* of the benefits promised, she was instantly rendered obstinate, and unteachable; therefore, instead of relenting and warning others, she gave to her husband, and he eat; all the islanders tasted, or *approved*, and became rebels to their prince. The prince, roused to anger, instantly appeared among them. They trembled, they fled, they hid themselves under the vines and trees around them. He summoned them into his presence; he ascertained their guilt, their excuses only proving their impenitence and obstinacy. He drove them from their rivers of water, their fruitful vale, their blooming garden. He sent them to glean a scanty subsistence in the thorny woods, and cold and barren mountains. There, instead of finding provisions spontaneously

taneously inviting their acceptance, not one fruit tree rose till it was planted ; not a flower bloomed, but with great care ; not a blade of corn sprang up, but with laborious cultivation. Every morsel of bread, and every drop of water, was gained by toil, and the sweat of the brow. Alienations and quarrels, sickness and death, and every species of misery, weighed down their spirits. The people too late found themselves undone. There was no way by which *they* could recover their lost blessings.

The Prince, however, when he expelled them from their former delightful abode, had given them some intimations that there might be a reconciliation between them. He led them to expect that one of their race would destroy the influence of the artful *foreigner* who had been the means of their revolt. Subsequent intimations of this kind he made to them from time to time, more and more explicit, as they were wandering in the deserts, lodging in the dens of the mountains, afflicted and tormented. On the strength of these intimations, a partial, imperfect intercourse was maintained between the Prince and his revolted subjects. Some of them relying on the mediation promised, ventured to return to their sovereign, to resign themselves to his disposal, and subject themselves to his laws. But most of the people, not believing his proposals of clemency, and resenting the hardships they endured, maintained a perpetual warfare with their king.

In the fulness of time the Prince introduced Kreefna, his only son, to make reconciliation between him and his revolted people. The benevolent son was delighted with the office, having the most tender concern for his father's kingdom. The wise and the good were delighted with him ; he rapidly grew in their esteem and affection. He finally avowed himself a public character, sent by his father to save his lost subjects. The *foreigner* who first excited revolt had continued in the island, king of the insurgents : he was now alarmed ; he felt his throne totter ; he felt that something must instantly be done, or all was lost. He applies himself to this rising character, and exerts all his cunning to persuade him to leave his father's interest, and enlist under his banner : he shows him all the palaces and cities of the island ; he promises to make them all his own, if he would unite in the rebellion. With infinite *disdain* the son rejects his proposals, and proceeds in his public office. He explains his father's designs, he displays the beauties and excellencies of his character ; he calls them to duty and to life : he travels from city to city, from one province to another. He heals diseases, which his father had sent as a punishment ; he feeds the poor ; he comforts the afflicted ; he visits the prisoners, their chains fall off, and they are free ; he forgives some ; he raises others from the dead. The islanders were amazed ; they offered to make him king ; it was

was fondly hoped by many that all would submit to his directions.

Though tormented with his dismal prospects, the *foreigner* did not despair. He makes one daring effort more. He addresses one of Kreefshna's own family. Knowing his constitutional passion, he offers him money; he succeeds. The domestic friend and companion promises to betray his master. At the same time the usurper stirs up a spirit of jealousy and envy in the principal people of the capital. Kreefshna is clandestinely arrested, has a mock trial, is condemned, and executed in the most barbarous manner. His friends are terrified, and fly in every direction: every hope is destroyed; they are in total despair. The triumph of the insurgents was complete. They remembered that Kreefshna had spoken of rising again. They guarded his tomb; they covered it with a ponderous rock; they affixed the public seal. But, within the time expected, events more awful than at his execution amazed the people. Then the rocks were rent, and the sun darkened; now angels, robed in lightning, descended; the earth trembled at their approach, the tomb opened, and Kreefshna came forth. He collected his scattered friends; he gave them information new and surprising; he assured them that he had voluntarily given up his life; that he had bled that his father's subjects might never die: that this was the plan of reconciliation from the beginning. He commanded them to go forth, and publish these tidings to the whole island; he promised to attend them, and to give them victory over every enemy. They published the news. The people were affected, and convinced, and overcome. Thousands, in one day, believed in Kreefshna, and were reconciled to their prince. They proceeded in their glorious work, till the most solitary vales and hills, the most distant capes and promontories, echoed the news of reconciliation. The people returned to their king. The praises of Kreefshna and his father mingled in every song, their temples rose in every city and village, the harp and the organ told the people's joy. They were more blest than before their first revolt. It was supposed the *foreigner* had left the island. Very few acknowledged themselves his friends; his temples were thrown down; his memory was execrated. But in a short time it was found that he had only concealed himself, that he might act with more advantage when a good opportunity should occur. By the watchmen or public centinels of Kreefshna he was soon recognized muffled in deep disguise in one of their temples. He pretended to be a fellow labourer with them, and, lest he should be suspected, he was more precise and *apparently* religious than they were, or than Kreefshna himself. He not only sprinkled with water those who became loyal to their prince, with their households; but also bells, and

sometimes the skulls of those who had been long dead: he not only consecrated each seventh rising morn to the service of the prince and his son, but he dedicated a multitude of days, so that the people were impoverished by their neglect of labour. He not only taught that the king or his son would pardon rebellion, but he himself for money gave indulgences for the most alarming treason against the government. He not only made supplications for the living, but for the dead. By these means he regained a large part of the island to himself. He fastened their chains, before the people suspected they were prisoners. He ruled with a rod of iron, while they dreamed they were still serving their lawful sovereign. In other parts he flung off the mask, assumed his own character, murdered or banished the public officers of Kreefna, and established his own maxims and customs, making it death for any but his own people to be seen in these provinces. In another part he again put on a false character, pretending to be the friend of their rightful prince, by whom, he said, he was sent to finish the work of Kreefna, and perfect the system he had begun. He collected armies, and with fire and sword recovered the fairest provinces that ever bowed to the authority of Kreefna; he trampled on his tomb, and subdued those cities and hamlets where he had lived, and was personally known.

Thus almost the whole island is again in a state of insurrection; the old, subtle *foreigner* waves the flag of triumph over the noblest cities, and richest provinces. For a long time the friends of the king's son have been discouraged and inactive. With tears of compassion and terror they have seen rebellion spreading; but have had no courage to make resistance, and still less have they thought of conquest or victory themselves.

One of the populous districts of the prince, where he had thousands of real friends, and where all professed friendship, has lately lifted the standard of revolt, and gone over to the enemy's camp. Their shoutings and violence of rejoicing made the island tremble; the surrounding billows echoed their frantic yellings. They gloried in crushing their former master, and in pouring contempt on his service, and infamy on his cause. They overturned his altars, burned his temples, and murdered his friends. This explosion of treason, with some encouraging symptoms of zeal and success in *other* parts, has roused the friends of Kreefna in every part of the island. Fear and hope have united their influence to call forth their energies. They have assembled, they have consulted, they have established correspondencies, they have circulated the laws and promises of their prince, they have sent forth agents into every part of the island to see what can be done in such a deplorable state of things. These agents are faithful and loyal subjects, and real friends

friends of their rebellious fellow men. They instruct them, they warn them, they beseech them to submit to their sovereign. They sacrifice their ease and health, they expose their lives, for the good of their brethren. It is a night of terrific darkness; still there are some scattered rays of light, some success, and hopes of more. They call to others to fly to their assistance: though the enemy has come in like a flood, they are determined to lift up a standard against him. The whole island is moved—some things look encouraging—the issue is uncertain.

From this narrative it is evident these islanders are a wicked, depraved race of beings. They have revolted once and again; they have long rejected the clemency of their sovereign; they have murdered his son, who was entirely devoted to their good. They have destroyed thousands and thousands of the best men, and their best friends, merely for their attachment to Kreesna.

They are also wretched and undone. The kindness of their prince has its bounds. From the beginning he has told them, that, after trying the means of persuasion and compassion, he is determined to put his severest laws in execution. Accordingly he has appointed a day of trial; he is recording *every action* of each rebel; he has numbered the hours of his patience, after which there will be no mercy, no hope. Their situation calls for the pity and the prayers of all good men in all countries. Let us daily pray, that he who made them may have mercy on them, and reconcile them to duty—give them a spirit of subordination, that they may be saved from the wrath of their prince, which they have so daringly provoked.

ON THE STATE OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH.

[Concluded from page 102.]

3. **I**T only remains to observe, that the souls of the dead do exist in a state of sensibility, from death to the general resurrection. This is a natural conclusion from the foregoing particulars. If the soul be distinct from the body, and if it exist after the body is dissolved by death, then we may justly suppose, that it is either happy or miserable in its separate state. It is hard to conceive of a dormant spirit. Take away all exercises from the soul, and there is nothing left. Activity and sensibility appear to be as essential to the mind, as extension and solidity to the body. And it is, perhaps, no less difficult to form an idea of the soul's existing totally destitute of sensibility, than to form an idea of the body's existing totally destitute of solidity and extension. But, admitting the soul might exist, af-

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ter death, in a dormant state, yet we have no reason to think, that God would suffer it to exist in such a low and useless condition. God has made all things for himself, and especially the souls of men, which are moral agents. These he designed should be the active or passive instruments of promoting his own glory. Let us suppose, that only the souls of *saints* were to lie dormant from death to the resurrection; this would be an irreparable loss both to themselves and their Creator. It is generally maintained, that the world will stand six thousand years at least, from its first formation. Now, can we imagine that God would suspend the usefulness and happiness of departed saints through this long period of time? He delights in the love, and homage, and service, of saints; and they delight in obeying his will, and enjoying his favour. If therefore he should suffer death to throw them into a state of total insensibility, he would deprive himself of a large revenue of glory, and them of a large portion of celestial happiness. This constrains us to adopt the sentiment of the Assembly of Divines, that the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, while their bodies do rest in their graves until the resurrection. But we have no occasion for conjectures on this subject, which the scripture places in a clear and intelligible light. Many of the texts, which have been adduced to prove the existence of the soul in the intermediate state, equally proves its happiness or misery in that state. The soul of the rich man is represented as being in a state of torment, while the soul of Lazarus is in a state of the highest enjoyment. Judas is represented as being gone to his own place, which Christ assures us is a place of perdition. The penitent thief and the devout Stephen are represented as passing from the pains of death to the presence and enjoyment of Christ in paradise. The appearance of Moses and Elias, on the mount of transfiguration, is an infallible evidence of their happy existence since they left the world. The apostle John tells us that he had a vision of the martyrs in the kingdom of glory, "who cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" This is a plain though figurative representation of the knowledge and sensibility of departed spirits. The apostle Paul speaks of the ancient patriarchs "as inheriting the promises, and as the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven." But what he says of himself affords the most conclusive evidence that he expected to be happy immediately after death. This is plainly implied in what he says to the saints at Corinth, with whom he includes himself: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly,

earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. *Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.* We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." To the Philippians he expresses the same opinion and expectation in much stronger terms: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." This ardent desire of the apostle to leave the world was totally inconsistent with his believing that his soul would sleep from death to the resurrection. For it would have been far better for himself, as well as for the Philippians, to have lived, than to have died and sunk into a state of total insensibility and uselessness. But if he believed, that, so soon as he rested from his labours, his works would follow him into the world of light and love; he had abundant reason to desire, on his own account, to be absent from his body, and present with the Lord, which was far better than any place, or business, or enjoyment, in this present evil world. It is as certain, therefore, as his own declaration can make it, that he believed departed spirits are either happy or miserable from the dissolution to the resurrection of the body. And if the apostle Paul believed and taught this doctrine, we may rest satisfied that it is a real and important truth.

Though enough, perhaps, has been said to establish the point proposed, yet it may not be impertinent to take notice of two or three of the most plausible objections which have been urged against it.

One objection is, that the word *soul*, or *spirit*, does not signify in scripture any thing really distinct from the body. It is granted, the scripture sometimes uses the word *soul*, or *spirit*, in a loose or figurative sense. Sometimes the word means the whole person, sometimes the life, and sometimes even the body. But it is certain, that the scripture most commonly uses the word, in its strict and proper sense, to signify the spiritual part of man, in distinction from his material part. We know man is compounded of soul and body, and, therefore, it is not strange that one part should sometimes be put for the other, and even for the whole of his existence. The word *soul* is so generally used in a sense different from the word *body*, that when we find those two words in scripture, as well as in other writings, they naturally

naturally suggest different and directly opposite ideas. And indeed we find many places in the Bible in which the sacred writers use the word *soul*, or *spirit*, in perfect contrast with the word *body*. So that the various senses, in which the scripture uses the word *soul*, or *spirit*, afford no real objection against the essential distinction between the body and soul, and the perception and sensibility of the latter in a separate state.

Another objection is, that the word death signifies in scripture not merely the dissolution of the body, but the total extinction of the whole man. It is said, the inspired writers often speak of death as something similar to sleep, rest, silence, darkness, and destruction; which implies that the soul becomes extinct, or totally insensible, after death. These metaphorical representations of death are designed to denote the visible effects of it, in relation to the present state. Death does shut the eyes, close the ears, and silence the tongue, of the deceased. Death does lay the body at rest, and reduce it to dust or destruction. And death does probably put the soul beyond the knowledge of all the affairs and concerns of this world. Hence there appears to be a propriety in Christ's saying of Lazarus after he died, "He sleepeth;" in David's saying when a man dies, "In that day all his thoughts perish;" and in Solomon's saying, "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave." As the effects of death in relation to this world are the most visible and affecting to the living, it is not strange that the sacred writers should so often represent it under its most striking and awful appearances. But nothing can be reasonably inferred from this, against the word death's signifying, in its most strict and proper sense, the separation of the soul from the body, and its immediate transition out of time into eternity.

The last objection to be considered is, that the scripture represents good and bad men as being rewarded or punished according to their works, not at the day of their decease, but at the day of judgment; which seems to militate against the notion, that their souls do at death immediately pass into happiness or misery. There is but little weight in this objection. We know that good and bad angels are to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and that they will exist in a state of happiness and misery until that great day. Why then may not the souls of good and bad men exist in the same state of happiness and misery during the same time? It is perfectly consistent with the design of the day of judgment, that the souls of men should be happy or miserable until that solemn and decisive day arrives. And since all the happiness of the righteous, and all the misery of the wicked, in the intermediate states, will be as nothing in comparison with the solemnities and consequences of the day of judgment, there is a great propriety in calling

calling that the GREAT DAY, as comprehending and absorbing all other days; and in directing good and bad men to look forward to that day, rather than to any other, for their full and final reward.

PHILONOUS.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

1. **I**F I fear God merely because he is infinitely great, and able to destroy me forever, my fear is servile, and I am a sinner. But if I fear him because I really love his perfections and honour, is not my fear filial, and am I not a Christian?

2. If I love Christ merely for the sake of his benefits, or my own happiness, I am a sinner. But, if I love him because he is God, and because he came into the world to glorify God, in the salvation of man, am I not his disciple?

3. If I attend religious duties merely to escape punishment, and to silence the complaints of a guilty conscience, am I not a hypocrite? But if I love communion with God, and desire to devote myself to his will, am I not one of his children?

4. If I maintain a splendid table, and feed and clothe many poor persons, merely to be esteemed a kind, generous man, I am no more than a covetous sinner. But if I give a *cent*, or a *cup* of cold water, in the name of Christ, because I love his cause supremely, am I not his friend?

5. If I mourn and sorrow merely because I am exposed to God's wrath and curse, I am a sinner. But if I really mourn and weep because I have dishonoured Christ, and grieved one of the least of his lambs, by not walking uprightly, am I not a Christian?

6. If I desire to live for the sake of the riches, honours and pleasures of this world merely, I am a sinner. But if willing to meet prosperity or adversity, life or death, for the sake of honouring God, am I not one of the chosen number?

7. If my last thoughts before sleeping, and my first thoughts after waking, are employed about temporal things merely, have I not reason to fear the testimony of the morning and evening? But if I am in the habit of sweetly contemplating divine things, when I close my eyes at night, and open them in the morning, may I not hope that I am the child of God?

8. If I read the Bible, and observe the Sabbath, from custom only, I am a sinner. But if I consult the word of God, and observe the regulations of the Sabbath, because I find my chief delight in divine things, may I not hope that my heart is renewed?

9. If I can behold the rich displays of God's goodness, morning and evening, destitute of the emotions of gratitude, I am a wicked

wicked creature. But if these glorious manifestations of divine excellency make me thankful and humble, and raise my soul to God, am I not a Christian?

10. If I am influenced by selfish motives in what I do, I am a sinner. But if I am influenced by the honour of God, and the good of souls, in my actions, am I not the follower of Christ? Yes: and the Lord give me grace to acknowledge him in all my ways, and he will direct my paths.

Question. Is self-examination the first or the last duty of any unrenewed sinner?

An answer is desired by the writer, from some candid inquirer after truth.

THEOPHILUS.

CONCERNING THE DUTY OF A CHURCH TO CENSURE ITS MEMBERS FOR THE SIN OF HERESY.

THOUGH critics may disagree respecting the etymology of the word heresy, yet there is no occasion for settling this point in the present disquisition. It must be allowed on all hands, that it is commonly used to signify any religious sentiment which is supposed to be repugnant to any important or essential doctrine of the gospel. And as all denominations of Christians have a larger or smaller catalogue of fundamental articles of faith; so they all have occasion to use the term heresy, and to use it in the same sense, to denote such religious opinions as they deem inconsistent with the first principles of Christianity. Though some men may use the word more freely, and others more sparingly, yet all use it in a bad sense, to denote something which they disapprove and condemn. No person considers what he calls heresy as a beauty, but as a blemish. Some, perhaps, would not choose to call heresy a *moral* evil, because they consider all errors as flowing from a defect in the understanding, rather than from any sinful exercise of the heart. But it is the general opinion of Christians, that great, essential, fundamental errors in religion are the fruit of an unchristian spirit. There is, however, a diversity of opinion respecting the degree of criminality in those who embrace heretical sentiments. Many suppose, that, notwithstanding the heart must be more or less concerned in embracing false religious sentiments, yet there is a wide difference between the criminality of error, and the criminality of open vice, or immorality. And, though they allow that professors of religion may and ought to be censured for overt acts of wickedness, in transgressing the rules of the gospel, yet they cannot allow that they may or ought to be censured merely for maintaining and propagating corrupt sentiments in religion. It is therefore a very important practical question,

question, whether a church of Christ ought to censure its members merely for the sin of heresy. It requires a large measure of candour, to speak, or write, or read, upon this subject, with propriety and advantage, because every person feels, in the view of it, that he is liable to be deemed or treated as an heretic by every one who differs from him in any important articles of faith. There is no room to doubt, however, but the following observations will be read with as much impartiality, at least, as the writer discovers.

It clearly appears from scripture, that heresy is a censurable evil. The Apostle, in his epistle to Titus, expressly requires an heretic to be cast out of the church: "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." According to this description of an heretic, he is one who avows his errors, and the church have nothing to do but to use proper means to convince and reclaim him; and, in case he remains incorrigible, to cast him out as unworthy of their communion. In the sixteenth of Romans the Apostle directs the church to mark and avoid its erroneous members: "Now I beseech you, brethren, *mark* them which cause divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine* which ye have learned, and *avoid them*. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and *by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*." There can hardly be a doubt but that these persons caused divisions and offences, by holding and propagating unscriptural doctrines, and that the church was directed to excommunicate them for their heresy. The Apostle gives a similar direction to the church of Galatia: "There be some that trouble you, and would *pervert* the gospel of Christ." Such surely were heretics. But says he, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that we have preached, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." This word signifies the same as anathema, which was the second degree of excommunication among the Jews; and if it be to be taken in this sense here, then the Apostle expressly commands the Galatians to excommunicate heretics. Or if accursed refers to God, it will amount to the same thing; for such as justly fall under the curse of God ought to fall under the censure of the church. But the Apostle fixes the sense of this passage by another in the same epistle, in which he evidently speaks of the same persons, who corrupted and troubled the same society of Christians: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. I would that *they were cut off* that trouble you." By cutting off these persons, he cannot mean

any thing less than excommunicating them for their heresy. The benevolent and catholic apostle John forbids believers having any intercourse with heretics: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine," meaning the doctrine of the gospel, "receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." If an heretic may not be admitted into a private house, much less into the church of Christ; and if he may not be admitted into the church, surely he may not be suffered to continue there, if he already belongs to it. "Neither bid him God speed;" which prohibits a common token of Christian charity, and which Christians were wont to deny heretics. It is said, this Apostle once meeting Cerinthus the heretic at the bath, retired instantly, on his account, without bathing. And Polycarp treated Marcion, another heretic, in a similar manner. These instances are a practical explanation of the apostolic precepts concerning the treatment of those who imbibe and propagate dangerous errors. But the conduct of Paul deserves still greater regard. He writes to Timothy, that "some had put away faith and a good conscience, and made shipwreck of the faith." He then mentions two in particular, Hymeneus and Alexander; "*whom,*" says he, "*I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.*" This carries the force of a divine precept, to excommunicate heretics. In this connexion we ought to consider the practice of the Christian church from the days of the apostles to the present time. And we find that all denominations of Christians have been as strict in disciplining men for heresy, as for open and gross immorality. Candour requires us to believe, that though the Christian church have often mistaken orthodoxy for heresy, yet they have founded their practice, in censuring supposed heretics, upon what they considered the true sense of scripture. So that the long and uninterrupted practice of the church clearly proves, that they have believed heresy to be a censurable evil. And it is certainly strange that Christians in general, who have differed in so many points, should agree in this, unless the scriptures plainly teach that professors of religion ought to be disciplined for unchristian sentiments, as well as for unchristian conduct. And here it is very proper to observe, that it is a dictate of reason, as well as of scripture, that heresy is not less censurable than immorality. All the good ends are to be answered by censuring the professors of religion for heresy, as by censuring them for open impiety. If the purity of the church is promoted by casting out the impure and immoral, the same good purpose is answered by excommunicating the grossly erroneous. For those who teach loose sentiments may do as much to corrupt a church as those who are loose in their practice. A
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man who profanes the sabbath may corrupt a few ; but a man who denies the sabbath may corrupt multitudes. The purity of the church, therefore, may be more promoted by censuring a member for denying the sabbath to be holy time, than by censuring a member for profaning that holy day. If the good of the offender be regarded as another end of discipline, this may be obtained by censuring an heretic, as well as by censuring an immoral person. As the immoral man is to be censured, that his soul may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, so the heretic is to be delivered over to the father of error, that he may cease to wrest the scriptures to his own and others' destruction. If it be the ultimate end of church discipline to promote the glory of God, this important design may be as fully answered by censuring men for destructive errors, as for destructive practices. There is no other way in which the church can express so much concern for the divine glory, as in censuring its members for injuries immediately done to God. In a word, every argument which will prove that a church ought to censure one man for immorality, will equally prove that they ought to censure another for heresy. *[To be continued.]*

LETTERS ON SOLITARY DEVOTION,

FROM PASCAL TO JULIA.

LETTER II.

MY DEAR JULIA,

THE duty of devotion, as comprehending a series of acts through the course of life, may properly enough be considered as comprehending meditation and reading the word of God. But as prayer is the leading part, and was what, as I suppose, your request chiefly respected, you will understand me as having this principally in view.

Prayer, as a general duty, is undoubtedly a dictate of natural religion. I mean, reason, independent of that obligation which results from any revealed precepts, naturally leads us in this manner to express our feelings and wants to that uncreated Being on whom we feel ourselves to be entirely dependent. Our weaknesses and distresses, and a conviction, which it is difficult to wear out of our minds, that there is a God, that he is good, that he is able and inclined to help us, and that no other being in the universe can, create a kind of necessity for us often to have recourse to this duty. All religions, even the grossest kinds of polytheism, adopt it. Atheists alone consistently reject it. On the supposition that there is no God, it is indeed an absurdity ; but on the supposition that there is, it is a duty with which

which reason and conscience will not permit us entirely to dispense. An affectionate, dutiful heart as naturally resorts to prayer, as the infant clings to the bosom of its mother, as the scholar asks instruction from his beloved teacher, and as the miserable, penniless, perishing stranger asks alms of the affluent. We find it wrought into the poetic descriptions of antiquity. Homer and Virgil have occasionally represented their heroes, and chief personages, as in the attitude of prayer. David, the great poet of Israel, abounds in prayer. Our modern Milton has carefully elevated the characters of Adam and Eve, by making their primitive innocence, and subsequent repentance, express themselves in a devotional strain. You remember, for I recollect your attachment to the poem of *Paradise Lost*, the following beautiful lines, expressing an evening prayer of Adam, attended by Eve, while yet happy in their innocence :

" Thus at their shady lodge arriv'd, both stood,
 " Both turn'd, and under open sky ador'd
 " The God that made both sky, air, earth and heaven,
 " Which they beheld, the moon's resplendent globe,
 " And starry pole : Thou also mad'st the night,
 " Maker Omnipotent ! and thou the day,
 " Which we, in our appointed work employ'd,
 " Have finish'd, happy in our mutual help,
 " And mutual love, the crown of all our bliss,
 " Ordain'd by thee, and this delicious place,
 " For us too large, where thy abundance wants
 " Partakers, and uncropt falls to the ground.
 " But thou hast promis'd, from us two, a race
 " To fill the earth, who shall with us extol
 " Thy goodness infinite, both when we wake,
 " And when we seek, as now, thy gift of sleep."

And afterwards, describing their repentance :—

" So spake our father, penitent, nor Eve
 " Felt less remorse ; they forthwith to the place
 " Repairing, where he judg'd them, prostrate fell
 " Before him, reverent, and both confess'd
 " Humbly their faults, and pardon beg'd, with tears
 " Watering the ground, and with their sighs the air
 " Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign
 " Of sorrow unfeign'd, and humiliation meek."

Prayer is more clearly enjoined, both by precept and example, in the holy scriptures. It is impossible to read the scriptures with an impartial mind, and not adopt the conclusion, that all the holy men, whose characters are there brought into view, were men of prayer. The devotional addresses of the patriarchs, of Moses, Samuel, Jeremiah, David, and Daniel, prove

prove undeniably their habitual intercourse with God in exercises of this nature. Almost the first act, in which we find Paul engaged after his conversion, is solitary prayer. It is mentioned emphatically, "Behold he prayeth." We find Peter engaged in the same exercise, and under circumstances which strongly indicate its frequency. The more perfect example of our Redeemer is an example of feeling and habitual devotion. We find him repeatedly engaged both in social and solitary prayer. At the same time we are to suppose, that but a very small proportion of the acts of his life are recorded in the gospels. They were written with a design to furnish a historic sketch of the most material transactions of his public ministry. In so succinct a view, of so active a life, a thousand occurrences must be supposed which are not noticed. In that intercessory prayer of his which is put down in the 17th chapter of John, and which I dare say you have read many times with tears, there is such a strain of holy familiarity with his Father, such unparalleled sweetness of filial love and confidence, that one would think, no man could read it without longing to spend every breath in this exercise.

The express manner in which our Lord has inculcated solitary prayer, engagedness, frequency, and perseverance in prayer, is certainly so familiar to you, that I should be uselessly employed in multiplying quotations of this nature. Of one place, however, I cannot avoid reminding you, and beg you always to keep it in remembrance, because it is so perfectly to this point. It is in the 6th chapter of Matthew, 6th verse: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Secret prayer is here expressly enjoined by our Best Friend. Can we live in the neglect of it, and yet fancy we love him?

The moment I were convinced, my dear Julia, that you, or the best friend I have on earth, lived habitually in the neglect of secret prayer; that moment I should think all claim to Christian confidence was forfeited. I could no longer look on you as the dear fellow disciple, but as the despiser, of my Lord? Punctuality, resolution and perseverance in prayer are inculcated in that memorable parable, given on purpose, recorded in the 17th of Luke, at the beginning. The epistles of Paul abound so much, not only in urging an habitual devotion as the current of pious affection, but in undisguised attestations of its being wrought into his own life, that it seems impossible any one should imagine himself possessed of the holy temper, who neglects this portion of Christian duty. There is scarcely any point which Paul urges more strenuously. "Continue," says he, "*instant* in prayer:—Pray always:—Pray without ceasing:—
Praying

Praying always, with all prayer, and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance:—In all things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make known your wants and requests unto God.”

The impression you now feel may seem to render all such proof of the duty superfluous. Yet it may not be wholly so. Your mountain may not always stand as strong as it appears to stand at present. There is danger that this conviction may in some degree be obliterated from your mind. A sense of duty may be more lost to you. I must beg of you, therefore, not to indulge the thought, that you have as deep and as abiding an impression of your obligation in this article as you need. You are still the subject of much spiritual weakness. Review, my dear sister, again and again, the abundant scriptural evidence which, all over the Bible, offers itself of this indispensable duty.

My moments of leisure just at this time are few, and occasional. I must therefore take leave again, with assurances of my most affectionate regard, &c.

DYING EXERCISES OF A LADY.

For the Massachusetts Missionary Magazine.

MESSRS. EDITORS,

SHOULD you judge the following narrative worthy to be communicated, please to give it a place in your Magazine. It is founded in truth, though for certain reasons it is given under fictitious names.

PAMELA.

MARIA was married to a gentleman of property, blessed with a number of friends, whom she justly held in high estimation. Having been too inattentive to the service of God, and the perusal of the sacred writings, she easily embraced the belief that all would be saved. She had not long enjoyed the sweets of domestic life before she experienced an affecting change in her circumstances. She was suddenly seized with a complaint which threatened dissolution. Her disorder was so violent as at certain times to weaken, and even to derange, her mental powers. It pleased God after a short time so far to abate its force as caused her to enjoy her reason in a more clear, uninterrupted manner. One of her friends, who felt a concern for the welfare of her soul, as well as for the health of her body, having called to see her, kindly inquired of her what was the state of her mind, and on what her hopes for futurity were placed. Maria informed her she considered it unkind to distress her at such a time. You know (added she) I have done my duty so far

far as I have known it, and have not injured any one. Her friend informed her we should depend for our acceptance with God on the righteousness of the great Redeemer. This so greatly distressed the mind of Maria that she requested her friend to leave her. This request was complied with. But the absence of her friend did not give her peace. The mind of Maria was much agitated through the night. The next day she requested an interview with her friend. She informed her she was then convinced of her sad, her perishing state as a sinner, and wished to cast herself, as a penitent offender, on the mercy of God through Christ. After this she manifested a great change in her views, and in the exercises of her mind. She expressed a great esteem for those who she conceived were Christians. She was very grateful to the minister who occasionally prayed with her. She desired her child might be enjoined to read the Bible. So impressed was her mind with the error of her former opinions, and the danger of cherishing them, that she left a particular message to a dear friend who was absent respecting the danger of the doctrine of universal salvation, which her friend believed. After continuing a short time, she died with calmness and resignation, leaving her consort and her other connexions the consoling hope, that their loss was her gain.

Let the above recital encourage Christians in conversing with others in seasons of sickness and adversity. Let not the fear of man, which so often bringeth a snare, prevent them on such occasions from suggesting such thoughts as relate to the great concerns of the soul, to the way of salvation through Christ. Should they be the means of saving a soul from death, and of adding one to the number of the blessed on high, how great their joy! how richly compensated for what they may have done!

Aiming at brevity, many observations which the above suggested will be omitted.—That some may, by a divine blessing, be benefited by having this made public, is the hearty desire of a friend to your Magazine.

ANECDOTE OF A FERRYMAN.

To the Editors of the Massachusetts Missionary Magazine.

GENTLEMEN,

THE following Anecdote was received from a very authentic source, and is offered for your use, by an ardent friend to the important publication in which you are engaged.

DURING the summer of 1799 the Rev. Mr. G. was employed as a gospel missionary in the Genessee country. He

He had occasion one day to cross a ferry, which was kept by a man of immoral character, infidel sentiments, and insolent manners. The boat being wet, and Mr. G.'s foot slipping as he attempted to step into it, he narrowly escaped falling. With persons of common decency, his hoary head, his venerable appearance and sacred profession would have secured him from any insulting remark. To this security his excellent character, if known, would have contributed much. But the impudent ferryman, whether he had before heard of Mr. G. or not, seized with avidity such an opportunity of making himself merry at a clergyman's expense. "Well, old man," said he, "if you had taken one glass more where you stopped just now, it would have laid you upon your back." The worthy passenger made no reply, but, on recovering himself, stepped into the boat with a *solemn countenance*, which said, as plainly as it could, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou be like unto him." By such meekness and wisdom the ferryman perceived his insolence disarmed, and immediately altered the style of his address. Having known Mr. G.'s clerical profession by his clothing, if not otherwise, and probably aware that his own character must have been understood from report, he began a conversation about the Christian religion, in the following manner: "When young men of your cloth, sir, come along, we attack them with ridicule, and endeavour to laugh them out of their religion. But it is to be supposed, from your age, that you are fixed in your sentiments. As you are a minister, I should like to converse seriously with you; for, if the Bible be true, which I do not believe, I should be glad to know it. Once I believed in it as much as any body; for my father and mother educated me superstitiously enough. But when I came to think for myself I discarded it altogether. Now I am rid of all my childish fears, I enjoy myself better than ever in my life before, and sleep as quietly as any body. I find myself considered of much more consequence in the neighbourhood than formerly: I have persuaded many into my way of thinking; and in every great frolic I am the man to take the lead. There can be no truth in Christianity, or else I should not enjoy myself so well." He concluded this daring account of his deistical state of mind by some remarks on the benevolence of the Deity, and the arbitrariness, partiality and cruelty which he thought Christians ascribed to him.

Mr. G. then conversed with him as solemnly as he could; telling him that such joy must be transitory, and that he might not expect to lie very quietly on his dying pillow. He displayed speculative difficulties in the infidel system to the surprise of his antagonist; and, when they had crossed

crossed the river, left him, with this advice: "You profess to believe in the benevolence of God, and Christ says, 'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me: if any man will do *his* will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' If, then, you really wish, as you declare, to know the truth, you will humbly, fairly and fully inquire after it, praying heartily to a benevolent God, that he will assist you to see things in their just light. Adopt this method, and, I doubt not, you will find that the Bible is a divine revelation."

Not many months afterwards Mr. G. returned; and, hearing that the ferryman was sick and in distress, he went to see him. He found him glad then to see a minister of Christ, and not a little affected, that one whom he had without provocation insulted would condescend to visit him in his trouble, although uninvited. "Your words, Mr. G. I have found to be true," said he; "my past conduct now gives me inexpressible remorse; and I fear there can be no mercy for such a sinner. The providence of God respecting me has been very remarkable. In the midst of my infidelity and wickedness, I had a wife uncommonly pious and exemplary, who was continually reproving and warning me. I was lately taken violently sick with a fever, when she became more concerned than ever for my soul, prayed with me and for me in a very moving manner, and begged earnestly of God that he would spare my life, even at the expense of her own, expressing her assurance that I should be lost if I died as I was; that death was no terror to her, and that she should rejoice to die in my stead. Her prayer," he added, "has been granted: my fever soon took a favourable turn, my wife was taken sick of the same disorder, and she is now among the dead." At this time he refused all consolation; but Mr. G. had afterwards the satisfaction of seeing this very man rejoicing in the grace of God, and the hope of the gospel.

Let infidels bow to the power of truth; let convinced, despairing sinners be encouraged to cast themselves upon infinite mercy; let believers recollect with gratitude what has been done for them; and let Christian relatives and companions realize how much they may do, under the blessing of Heaven, for the sanctification and salvation of perishing immortals, united to them by the tenderest bonds of nature, and placed most immediately within the reach of their influence.

BREACH OF THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT PUNISHED.

To the Editors of the Mass. Miss. Magazine.

GENTLEMEN,

IT is of importance that the mind be impressed with the moral government of God. That the following narrative, abridged from the life of Mr. John Wesley, has such a tendency, is the opinion of
EUSEBIUS.

WHEN Mr. John Wesley was six years of age his father's house was burned, and he was taken from the chamber window while his room was in flame. The family were dispersed among their friends; John was received into the house of a neighbouring clergyman, where he continued a year. He loved the family as he did his own. Mr. Hume had four sons and one daughter. Three of the sons were educated at Oxford, and became preachers; the other settled in Africa in the Guinea trade. After Mr. Wesley's return from Georgia, he received a letter to serve the church of one Mr. Hume, deceased. Mr. Wesley, inquiring whether it were his former benefactor, received the following account of the family: "About nine months since," said his informer, "Mr. Hume rode out, and watering his horse at a deep pond, the beast plunged, Mr. Hume was wetted, caught a cold, which produced a fever, of which he died. The patron of the living, wishing to continue it in the family, offered it to the eldest son. The parsonage house was just finished; the son took possession before the walls were dry; the dampness occasioned his speedy death. The second son was then presented, and died in a few weeks. The third son set off from Oxford to receive the presentation; on his way fell in love with the daughter of his host, made proposals, and in a few days returned, and was married. In six weeks the lady was brought to bed, and Mr. Hume soon died with grief. In a few days news was received that the son in Africa had died on his passage home. Mrs. Hume, sinking under the weight of such distresses, soon died of a broken heart. A short time after, the daughter, the last of the family, ordered her servant to bring her a spoonful of julep; the servant, mistaking the bottle, brought her a spoonful of laudanum; she fell into a sleep, and never woke."

This awful narrative made Mr. Wesley recollect a remarkable observation of his mother's some years before. He had been commending the family in very strong terms. "John," replied Mrs. Wesley, "depend upon it that family will come to an untimely end." With surprise Mr. Wesley asked, "Madam, why
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do you speak so severely of this lovely family?" "John," said she, "I will tell you why: I have observed in the course of my life that where persons have grossly violated the fifth commandment, and afterwards have been brought to the fear of God, the Lord has reversed the promise, and punished them with temporal death. Mr. Hume and his family lie under this censure. I remember the time when his mother lived under his roof. He used her cruelly. He grudged her every bit of meat she put in her mouth; the whole family had his spirit. Depend upon it God will remember them for this."

THE PRUDENT CHOICE.

WHEN J. S. a young man, embraced the gospel, and made an open profession of it, his father, not a little offended at his conduct, gave him this *sage* advice: "James, you should *first* get yourself established in a good trade, and then think of, and determine about, religion." Father," replied James, "Christ advises me very differently. He says, 'Seek *first* the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added unto you.'—How many fathers differ from Jesus Christ in their judgment about religion and its importance! He says, *first*, but many say, last."

A WORD IN SEASON.

A PIOUS young gentleman was travelling in company with a lady, who chose to introduce, as the pleasing topic of conversation, the advantages and the exquisite pleasures which theatrical entertainments afforded her. After she had for some time expatiated upon the subject, with great fluency, the gentleman accosted her to this effect: "Madam, you have enumerated many of the advantages, and pleasures you receive from theatrical entertainments; but one material thing has escaped you. Pray, Sir, replied she, what is that? It is, Madam, said he, the exquisite pleasure that your reflections on the theatre will afford you on a death-bed, and in your departing moments."

*Perhaps a thunder-bolt from heav'n
Might then have less confusion giv'n.
The gay young lady felt the smart,
Conviction seiz'd her wounded heart!
No more she boasts her former joys,
Religion now her thoughts employs.
False pleasures can no more amuse;
Superior bliss she now pursues.
O happy change! she says, and tells you why:
Religious joys will last, when call'd to die.*

OBITUARY.

OBITUARY.

Mr. J. B. B.

ON Tuesday, 26th of April last, I was called to visit a young man in the west parish of Lynn, by the name of J—B—. I had never been acquainted with him before—found him apparently drawing near his last change. He had his reason, was calm and composed, and conversed freely. I asked him questions relative to the state of his mind, which he answered in a sensible, pleasing and satisfactory manner. He said he was a great sinner, and had neglected his soul and religion while in health, and that he had been filled with many fears that he should be eternally lost: but of late those fears had been removed by views of the infinite fulness of the mercy of God through Christ for all who repented of their sins, and believed in him. This he hoped God had disposed him to do. He saw such beauty and glory in Christ, that he could trust his soul in his hand; and he felt peace and comfort in believing, and was willing to die. His conversation gave me reason to hope that he had met with a saving change of heart. After addressing the Throne of Grace on his behalf, I left him; not expecting to see him again alive. He appeared to have a great desire to do or say something to promote the everlasting good of his fellow men, and especially the youth.

In the course of the week, he sent for his neighbours, friends, and youthful companions, and addressed them in a very pertinent, solemn, affecting manner, upon the great concerns of their souls. He called upon them to repent, and make their peace with God, while young and in health; to take warning by himself, and number their days, and apply their hearts to true wisdom. It is hoped the dying counsel of this young man made impressions, upon some of the youth, that will not be easily effaced, but prove the means of their salvation.

He was much in prayer and religious conversation through the week; but had some moments of darkness, in one of which he looked upon his aunt, who stood by him, and said, "O aunt! what if I should be deceived? how dreadful my state!" She told him she hoped he had true repentance, and would not be deceived. But said he, "You know a sick-bed repentance is often a poor repentance: I shall not have time to prove my repentance to be sincere, by a holy life." But darkness soon vanished, light shone into his heart, and he spoke of the fulness and glory of Christ. His aunt asked him, if God should leave it to him to choose either to get well and live longer in the world, or to die soon, which he would prefer. He paused a moment, and said, he should choose to die, that he might be with Christ, who appeared all glorious and lovely to him.

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He requested that I might attend his funeral, and preach for their society the Sabbath after, and address the youth of his acquaintance, and call upon them to remember their Creator, and prepare for death, judgment and eternity. On Saturday I went, by his desire, to see him again. Nature appeared to be almost spent. He had his reason, and conversed to my great satisfaction. He was sensible that he was about to leave the world, and appeared perfectly resigned. Never did I hear a person speak of dying with such perfect composure, and such perfect freedom from the terrors of death. His views and feelings were not high and extatic, but he appeared to be in a sweet, calm, composed, resigned, happy frame. He said he had no desire to live, yet was willing, though in great distress, to wait God's time: that all this world was emptiness and vanity; but he had chosen God and Christ for his portion, and trusted he was not deceived. He conversed more or less with his friends through the day, and night succeeding, on the things of religion and *Eternity*, and on Lord's day morning, about 9 o'clock, with an audible voice commended his immortal spirit into the hands of God, and we hope sweetly fell asleep in Jesus, and ascended to the mansions of eternal glory, where he will be ever with the Lord, see his face, and behold his glory. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

The conduct of this young man, in his last sickness, exhibits a good example for every Christian upon a dying bed. They should not only live to the glory of God, and to promote the good of men, but they should die to his glory, and the good of souls. How can the dying breath of a saint be spent better than in speaking of the glory of God, recommending a precious Christ, and exhorting all about him to love and serve him? The words of a dying friend often sink deep, and make a lasting impression on the heart. The dying words and exhortations of this young man are a loud call to the youth to repent and seek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is near, by his word, providences, and his grace; that they may die in peace, and be forever blessed.

Stoneham, July 13, 1803.

JOHN H. STEVENS.

The Editors are pleased with concise narratives of this complexion, and hope they will from time to time be communicated.

EXTRACT

EXTRACT FROM A SERMON

Delivered April 18th, 1803, at the Funeral of Mrs. MARY DANA, Consort of the Rev. JOSEPH DANA, D. D. Pastor of the South Church in Ipswich; who died April 13, in the 53d year of her age. From John xi. 11: "Our friend—sleepeth." By DAVID TAPPAN, D. D. Professor of Divinity in Harvard College.

GOD grant that we may all notice the tender scene before us in the manner now described! The recent engagements and fatigue of the speaker prevent him from paying that full tribute to his late dear and much respected *Christian Sister*, which his judgment and heart would have prompted. On receiving the mournful intelligence of her death, the words of our text seized his mind, as a compendious and striking description of our departed friend. She was, my fellow Christians, to the eye of charity, the common and ardent friend of us and our Master. The God of nature and grace had eminently tuned her soul to the soft harmony of love. Her heart, in an early period of life, was hopefully brought to embrace that religion, which eminently consists in divine love and its amiable effects. This heavenly seed, being thus early sown in so kind a soil, yielded for a long time the most pleasant fruits. It imprinted on her spirit and countenance, on her language and deportment, the very soul and expression of Christian piety and goodness. It convinced, I believe, every person of moral discernment among her associates, that she had been with Jesus; that she had caught the devout, lowly, and benevolent spirit of his doctrine and example. She evidently delighted in the character of God and his Son as displayed in the Gospel. She loved the doctrines of grace, and that inward, humble and practical godliness which these doctrines promote. Her pious and benevolent ardour did not consist and evaporate in dry speculation, or in rapturous sensibility. It was a judicious and steady, a cordial and active principle. It shed its influence and lustre on her common actions. It made her uniformly good in every relation, employment and condition of life. It gave a spiritual direction to her numerous friendships. As her warm and open heart formed her for this refined species of intercourse, so her Christian spirit induced her early and assiduously to cherish a confidential intimacy with pious and congenial souls, especially among her own sex. She earnestly promoted and attended religious meetings, composed of such friends. Her epistolary as well as verbal correspondence with a number of these Christians eminently breathed, and tended to promote, the spirit of religion. She greatly assisted and comforted her consort, not only in his temporal concerns, and in the support and education of their common family, but in his Christian and pastoral profession, particularly by her tender and judicious discourse with young women and others.

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in this place, when under serious impressions. For such discourse she was peculiarly fitted by her discriminating judgment, especially on religious topics, by her long personal acquaintance with the power of godliness, and by her intimate converse with the Scriptures, and with chosen experimental writers. In short, her Christian love embraced in a fervent and open manner all the friends of Christ, especially his pious ministers. Many of these will never forget her affectionate esteem, her cordial hospitality, and her edifying conversation. Indeed she evidently loved and valued every human creature, and, according to her ability, sought the temporal and eternal happiness of all. She endured the frequent corrections of her heavenly Father with exemplary submission and complacency. With a composed and ready mind she met the approaches of the last enemy; and one of her latest petitions, which she uttered with emphasis, was, *that she might glorify God to the last.*

THE EDITORS

To Literary Gentlemen who patronize and support the Magazine.

GENTLEMEN,

WE wish, in some acceptable method, to express our gratitude for your wisdom and promptitude, in furnishing suitable pieces for the Magazine. Considering ourselves in some measure responsible for the leading features of the publication, we have been careful to ascertain the opinion of readers at large relative to the numbers already in the hands of the public: and we are happy to find that both the learned and unlearned are pleased and edified with your productions. Give us leave, at the same time, also to add, that the concise compositions addressed to the conscience and heart, which are calculated for the level of children and persons of but common information, are more acceptable than those which are learned and highly seasoned with metaphysics. We are not averse however from some deep and learned disquisitions, for the abilities and inclinations of our readers are various. But while you aim, Gentlemen, at inducing the accurate and inquisitive theologian to read and patronize the publication, it is hoped, while we have the honour of conducting it, that you will calculate your compositions for little folks rather than great ones, for children rather than for men of science. For, at this day, while there is a flood of books calculated for the learned, there are but few published which contain the proper rudiments of domestic and Christian education. But a word to the wise is sufficient. Pardon our freedom, and let us subscribe,

Your humble Servants,

THE EDITORS.

POETRY.

1 Peter i. 5. Who are kept by the mighty power of God, through Faith unto Salvation.

THREE happy souls, who with the Lamb

In heavenly places sit !
A kingdom is reserv'd for them,
And they are kept for it.

Shelter'd in his omnipotence,
Triumphant they ride on :
The pow'r of God is their defence,
And who shall cast them down ?

Them, as the apple of his eye,
Their great Redeemer keeps :
Their heavenly shield is always nigh,
Their guardian never sleeps.

He gives them faith, of future bliss
The earnest and the seal ;
The faith of his elect it is,
And it shall never fail.

Exult, ye saints, and shout aloud,
For your Immanuel reigns :
Satan already is subdu'd,
An enemy in chains !

Behold Jehovah's conqu'ring face ;
Behold the fiend retire !
Jesus shall bind him to his place,
And quench his darts of fire.

Great God ! if thine I also am,
With thy weak child abide :
And me, from fierce temptation's
flame,
In thy pavilion hide.

In thee I shall a host break through,
In thee obtain success :
Nor will I fear what flesh can do,
While God my helper is.

Jesus is able to controul
The fiercest rage of hell :
No weapon form'd against my soul
Shall prosper or prevail.

Supported by his dying love,
And by his Spirit seal'd.
I wait the crown laid up above,
That soon shall be reveal'd.

His presence in my heart I feel,
Nor will I be afraid ;
Satan can only bruise my heel,
But cannot reach my head.

Jesus hath me from death retriev'd,
Nor will he let me fall ;
I know in whom I have believ'd,
And trust him with my all.

GOSPEL MAGAZINE.

PRAYER OF AN AFRICAN.

THE sentiments expressed in the following lines were taken from the mouth of an African servant in the city of Charleston, (S. C.) by a gentleman who accidentally overheard him at prayer with a number of others. They were turned into humble metre by one who rejoices in the triumphs of redeeming grace.

BLEST be thy name, O God of grace !
Who teachest me to sing ;
My heart and voice I'll tune to praise
My Saviour and my King.

Where darkness and the shade of death
Th' untutor'd nations bind,
There I first drew my vital breath,
To all thy glories blind.

Nor rising day, nor setting sun,
Nor stars that gild the night,
Nor streams that thro' the vallies run,
Nor mountains' tow'ring height ;

Nor all the wonders of thy hand,
That shew creative skill,
Could lead, in that benighted land,
To know or do thy will.

No gospel there thy grace declares,
No Saviour's love is shewn,
No preacher the glad tidings bears,
That make thy mercy known.

Blest be the day that bro't me thence,
To this enlighten'd shore,
Where, loos'd from bonds of ignorance,
I'm taught my God to adore.

Here, slavery ! thy soften'd chain
And yoke I gladly bear ;
Thy burdens yield no grief nor pain,
Thy toils demand no tear.

For here, Blest Saviour ! I have learn'd
Thy truth and righteousness ;
Thy grace my mourning songs hath
turn'd
To hymns of joy and praise.